



**Missouri Governor — Michael L. Parson**  
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**2023 STATE OF THE STATE ADDRESS – NOT DONE YET**

**GOVERNOR MIKE PARSON**

Thank you Lieutenant Governor, Mr. Speaker, statewide officials, Judges of the Missouri Supreme Court, and state legislators.

It is an honor to be joined by the First Lady as I stand before you again today as the 57th Governor of the Great State of Missouri.

Today, I stand here with excitement and a renewed sense of optimism for the future of Missouri and its people.

This past year was one of opportunity. We recognized that. Took advantage of that. AND now we are reaping the benefits...both today and tomorrow.

By working together, we've done better than before. We've established a new baseline of service for state government. We've set a **new standard** for the people of Missouri.

Together, we've moved billions of dollars in investments across this state. Whether you live in Kansas City or St. Louis...Kennett or Rockport... grow corn or cotton...vote left, right, or center...We've left no community behind.

We are building a bench in this state that will continue the tremendous successes we are seeing. AND that means a bench that SEES everyone, that INCLUDES everyone, and is FOR everyone.

Teachers and police officers...state workers and factory workers... every hard-working Missourian is critical to the continued success of our state. Every year, we've supported them, invested in them, and we must never quit on them.

Last year, I stood before you and proclaimed that Missouri is Strong Today and will be Even Stronger Tomorrow. Well this year, I'm here to tell you that tomorrow has arrived...

Missouri IS Stronger today, and we're going to continue what we've started...Because THIS Governor isn't done yet...**WE... ARE...NOT... DONE... YET!**



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Office of Communications

This past year, words like “historical” “largest ever” and “most in history” seemed to become permanent parts of our vocabulary...whether it was workforce development, education, infrastructure, mental health, public safety, or agriculture...these words applied to all.

In October, we concluded a historic special session with the passage of the **largest** income **tax cut** in our state’s history.

We cut the tax rate and simplified the tax code for all Missourians. Missourians work hard, they provide for their families, pay their bills, and pay their taxes. AND they deserve to keep their hard-earned money.

This tax cut means that our administration will have cut Missourians’ taxes **three times** and by **20 percent**. Money that can help put gas in the car, food on the table, or saved for a rainy day. It means more money in our economy.

We thank Senator Koenig, Senator Hough, and Representative Smith for their leadership as well as everyone in this chamber who voted for and fought for this tax cut.

In Missouri...when the coffers are full from a booming economy, growing businesses, and job creation...we don’t spend for the sake of spending like we see in Washington D.C....we spend what is necessary for our growth...for the future...and put more money back in Missourians’ pockets **where it was EARNED**...and **where IT BELONGS**.

During that same special session, we also secured opportunity and support for our state’s number one economic driver...agriculture.

I am an Ag Governor and this administration will always stand up for our Missouri farmers and ranchers. AND we challenged legislators who say the same to do the same...

By working together with the leadership of Senator Bean and Representative Pollitt, we put politics and special interests aside and passed long term extensions for our critical agriculture tax credit programs...

Programs that create jobs, promote farm and business innovation, and help add value to our Missouri Grown products.

Despite the roadblocks, political games, and those who stood against agriculture... support for our farmers and ranchers could not be denied. AND we appreciate everyone who took a stand and offered your support for those who feed and fuel our economy.



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Office of Communications

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While tax cuts and support for agriculture are huge wins...you have probably noticed, MISSOURI IS ON THE MOVE.

Our economy is booming. Businesses are investing, growing, and creating jobs in our state.

Thanks to our focus on workforce development and infrastructure, we have achieved countless economic wins.

In 2022, our unemployment rate fell to 2.4 percent...the lowest rate ever recorded in the history of the State of Missouri, and it remains historically low today.

While the federal government tried to solve an inflation problem with more spending, we got to work creating jobs and securing business investment.

This year, we celebrated business announcements all across the State of Missouri...

In total, more than **\$2.9 billion dollars** and **nearly 5,000 new jobs** were created by businesses that utilized our state programs, like Missouri One Start.

Since its reform in 2019, Missouri One Start has trained nearly 130,000 workers for companies of all sizes.

Its success is why we are continuing our investment of \$27 million dollars for additional Missouri One Start training projects to help recruit and train skilled workers for companies choosing our state.

AND we are proud that **Missouri ranks 1st in the United States for our low cost of doing business...**

Whether it is investments in Missouri One Start, broadband, education, or so on, by prioritizing infrastructure and workforce development, companies are choosing our state to invest.

Some of the first things we are asked about on our Trade Missions is our progress on infrastructure, education, workforce, and our cost of doing business.

In fact, from our Trade Missions alone, we have been able to achieve over **1,000 jobs** and more than **\$1 billion dollars** in business investment for Missouri.

AND WE ARE NOT DONE YET

**Infrastructure**



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Office of Communications

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Last year, we made one of the largest investments in broadband expansion across our state.

Thanks to our efforts, nearly **70,000 under-served** homes and businesses across our state **NOW have broadband.**

BUT we know we can't stop now. That is why we are investing an additional \$250 million dollars to do even more.

If we can put electricity in every home, we can do the same with broadband today.

We are not done until **every** home, **every** school, **every** business, and **every** farm has access to quality internet.

Not only is broadband important so is our vast transportation network.

But this year, we learned the hard way that we must do more to improve transportation safety.

Over the summer, an Amtrak passenger train derailed near the small town of Mendon, killing four and seriously injuring dozens of others.

Thankfully in this instance, small town America rose to the occasion. Neighbors helping neighbors, strangers helping strangers...the Mendon community represented the best of our people...the best of our state.

AND on behalf of all Missourians...I want to thank them...

While the power of our people and the goodness of their character made a bad situation a little better this time, the state must be proactive and help prevent a similar situation again.

That is why we are including \$35 million dollars to begin updating railway crossings to modern day safety standards **ALL ACROSS OUR STATE...**

When I became Governor, we worked with all of you and set out to repair or replace 250 of our state's poorest bridges, and we are happy to report that 222 have already been completed, and the remaining bridges will be under contract by March.

We have also set out to address crumbling roads in rural areas. Thanks to our rural routes program established in last year's budget, 1,700 lane miles of low volume roads in the poorest conditions will be resurfaced by the end of June of this year.



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Office of Communications

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AND we are extremely proud of our Transportation Cost-Share which has awarded 28 local transportation projects with the funding to improve roads and bridges and bring economic development to their areas.

Through our \$75 million dollar investment and partnering with both public and private entities, we have leveraged more than \$175 million dollars in new projects all across our state, from the most rural areas to our urban areas.

As you can see, our infrastructure investments are making a real difference for Missourians in our state.

AND one project in particular we want to highlight is the I-270 North project in St. Louis...one of the largest investments ever in our state's history.

This project not only represents stronger infrastructure...it demonstrates the opportunities that these projects can bring to hard-working Missourians.

Involved with the I-270 project is Project Pave. A STEM program that works to mentor, teach, and support students in North St. Louis County high schools. These students get to pursue interests in highway design, engineering, and construction.

AND here with us today is Christian Malloyd.

Christian was an intern with Project Pave and secured full-time employment with Mill-stone Weber as an IT Technician **directly out of high school**...

AND that is exactly what we are trying to achieve.

Would you please help me in welcoming Christian and his fellow Project PAVE students to the chamber today?

While we might have thought we were just putting asphalt on roads or steel over waterways, what we're really doing is supporting the future.

These investments create REAL jobs that provide REAL careers... to support REAL families and REAL futures.

**AND WE ARE NOT DONE YET**

For years, congestion, traffic accidents, and delays have become serious issues for commuters on I-70. Not only are we concerned for motorist safety, these inefficiencies are costly to our state's economy. AND we must invest to improve I-70.



**Missouri Governor — Michael L. Parson**  
Office of Communications

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To those who say we can't afford it, I say we can't afford not to.

This year, we are requesting \$859 million dollars... the largest investment in decades... to widen and rebuild the I-70 corridor and take the first step in adding a third lane across our state.

This is a once in a lifetime opportunity.

And the **TIME...IS...NOW**.

**Education/Workforce Development**

Now, as a product of public education, the father of a school teacher, and grandfather of a first-year school teacher and preschooler, I know the American Dream could not be possible for so many without a quality education.

This year, we will again fully fund the foundation formula with an additional \$117 million dollars to ensure Missouri schools are receiving the support they need.

But as I've said, we've set a new standard in this state. AND that includes a new standard of accountability for our students, teachers, and administrators across the state.

Last year, we funded our part of school transportation for the first time in more than two decades, and **we aren't one and done**.

This year, we are again investing \$233 million dollars for school transportation to ensure our kids can get to and from school safely.

Additionally, last year, in working with the General Assembly, we funded the Career Ladder Program. Nearly 140 school districts participated and over **11,000 veteran** school teachers received an increase in pay.

This year, we are again funding the program with an additional \$32 million dollars to continue the state's part and benefit more Missouri teachers.

Another program we are very proud of is our Teacher Baseline Salary Grant program, which raised baseline teacher pay from \$25,000 dollars to \$38,000 dollars per year.

A total of 356 Missouri school districts participated in the program and provided pay increases to more than 6,000 school teachers.

Clearly this program is making a difference, and we are committed to continuing it for teachers like the one joining us today.



**Missouri Governor — Michael L. Parson**  
Office of Communications

---

In the upper gallery is one of the teachers we had the pleasure of meeting. She's a first grade teacher from Meadville R-4 School District located in Linn County.

She's a second year teacher and received a nearly \$7,000 dollar pay increase thanks to our baseline teacher pay program. She was able to move out of her parents' house, get married, and begin pursuing a master's degree.

Mrs. Fluckey is a great example of the majority of our educators who do it for the right reasons. She represents our educators who certainly don't do it for the money, but do it for our children and the future of our state.

Would you please join me in giving Mrs. Fluckey and all our Missouri educators a round of applause?

We also know that early childhood care is essential to our state's success.

We've already invested nearly \$1 billion dollars to improve our child care network and create more options for more Missouri families.

**BUT WE ARE NOT DONE YET**

We know child care remains a struggle for many parents and businesses. Child care providers often have to limit their hours due to staffing shortages or increase their prices...this poses a real challenge to parents as they weigh the decision to work or stay home.

Prior to COVID-19, more than 50 percent of Missouri residents lived in an area with a shortage of child care. We know that problem has only worsened with one-third of facilities no longer open after the pandemic.

We need to do better...for our parents, children, providers, and businesses.

Joining us today is Sharon Winton, the Director of Discovery Place child care right here in Jefferson City.

Ms. Winton stayed the course and kept her doors open...even as enrollment declined and revenue fell...

Even with her determination and passion for serving Missouri families... overcoming the challenges she faced might not have been possible without the state programs and services our Office of Childhood provides.



**Missouri Governor — Michael L. Parson**  
Office of Communications

---

Would you please join me in recognizing Ms. Sharon Winton, the children of Discovery Place, and all those who care for our children across the state?

Now...Ms. Winton faces the opposite issue...more and more families are seeking child care options. AND while she would love to help, she simply does not have the resources, space, or staff to accommodate.

To help address this issue, we are proposing three new child care tax credit programs.

These programs will help improve child care facilities, support employers who support their workers with child care assistance, and allow more of our dedicated child care workers to earn a pay increase.

We are also investing more than \$78 million dollars to increase Child Care Subsidy rates to child care providers across the state...

Together these actions will help more child care providers to start their business, stay in business, or expand their business.

BUT we are not stopping there...

Missouri's own Susan Blow established the first school kindergarten right here in the State of Missouri, and we want to expand on those efforts started so long ago.

This year, we are here to announce our plan to invest \$56 million dollars to begin expanding Pre-Kindergarten options to **ALL** low-income Missouri children.

Under this program, 50 percent of all our families with pre-k students will be able to enroll their children in expanded programs through their local school district or charter school at no cost.

There is a **clear need** to do better when it comes to **early childhood**. Let's **meet this moment** for Missouri kids, families, and businesses!

Now, for our non-college students or Missourians seeking a new career path...

We are investing \$3 million dollars in Apprenticeship Missouri to expand apprenticeship opportunities with a focus on IT, public health, education, and public safety, among others.

These programs are a great way for Missourians to learn a new skill and earn a good-paying job...right out of high school.





**Missouri Governor — Michael L. Parson**  
Office of Communications

---

Thanks to this program, we are happy to report that we were able to achieve our goal of creating **20,000 new apprenticeships THREE years** ahead of schedule.

AND thanks to this program we are **NOW 3rd in the United States for apprenticeships opportunities.**

This year, we are seeking \$2.2 million dollars for our 27 job centers across the state. With more than 195,000 job openings in Missouri...we must make sure Missourians who need a job get a job.

Additionally, to further support career opportunities for our young people, we are requesting \$500,000 dollars for our Jobs for America's Graduates to help more high school students further their education or go directly into the workforce.

For college bound Missourians, we are increasing core funding to our Community Colleges and 4-year institutions, by **seven** percent... the largest increase in more than 25 years.

Additionally, we are investing another \$275 million dollars for capital improvement projects on our college campuses...

We are also proposing an additional \$800,000 dollars for our Fast Track program to ensure that any qualified person seeking a scholarship is able to receive it.

For our high school seniors wanting to further their education, we are also again fully funding A+ scholarships.

AND to help promote workforce development on college campuses, we are recommending \$38 million dollars for our MoExcels program to expand employer-driven education and training programs.

Together, these investments will help our colleges and universities keep up with the educational demands of both today and tomorrow.

We all know manufacturing is a leading industry in our state. In fact, we rank **4th in the United State for new manufacturing facilities.**

But a serious hurdle for our manufacturing companies here in Missouri and across the nation is the semiconductor chip supply chain.



**Missouri Governor — Michael L. Parson**  
Office of Communications

To address this issue...for the first time...we are dedicating \$25 million dollars for research, program development, and training to increase our competitiveness for semiconductor manufacturing right here in Missouri.

The last thing we want is to rely on China when we CAN and WILL do it right here in Missouri.

**Government Reform**

These investments in infrastructure, workforce, and education cannot be achieved without a functioning and efficient state government...

AND the dedicated leaders in my Cabinet. Would members of my cabinet please stand to be recognized for all you do on behalf of the people of Missouri?

While businesses build their bench...we need to build the bench in state government.

As many of you know, the recruitment and retention of state employees has been a severe problem for our state. AND while we have made considerable advancements like wage increases, deferred compensation, and professional development opportunities...

MORE is needed.

Supporting our state workers means supporting the people of Missouri...AND we are not done yet.

This year, as part of our supplemental budget, we are requesting an immediate **8.7 percent** cost of living increase for our state employees.

For anyone who can't already see the dire need for this action, we want to be clear, this is not state government setting the market...this is merely an attempt by state government to stay competitive **with** the market.

If we allow state government to fall behind, we allow Missourians to fall behind.

With more than 7,000 positions open across state government, **this wage increase is necessary... and it is the MINIMUM we must do...**

**On behalf of all state employees**, I ask for your **full support** to pass this increase and **deliver it to my desk by March 1.**



**Missouri Governor — Michael L. Parson**  
Office of Communications

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We also want to improve the services we provide through our agencies like the Children's Division. This Division is critical to the health and safety of some of Missouri's most vulnerable children, yet it is critically understaffed and under-resourced.

By investing \$22 million dollars we can help alleviate the strain, hire more employees, and support struggling families and children.

We must do more and do better for our children, our families, and the future of our state.

We've come a long way... BUT for Missouri to stay on the move...so does state government.

**Health Care/Mental Health Care**

In 2022, fresh out of the grips of COVID-19, we understood the need to do better in this state when it comes to health and mental health care.

Last year, we made historic investments in health and mental health, including the new State One Health Lab, which states across the nation are using as a model for their own plans.

Now...frankly, an area in which we are heartbroken to be failing is maternal mortality. Currently, Missouri ranks 44th in the United States for our abnormally high maternal mortality rate.

This is embarrassing and **absolutely unacceptable**.

We are determined to change this. AND we are requesting \$4.3 million dollars to allow the Department of Health and Senior Services to implement a new maternal mortality plan.

DHSS estimates that 75 percent of maternal deaths are preventable with at least one meaningful change to treatment, whether directly to the patient or through the provider, community, or health care system.

We refuse to accept this tragic Missouri statistic. We must do better. If we can't get it right for the mothers and children across our state, we might as well pack our bags and let somebody else occupy our seats.

Let's support our **mothers**, let's support our **children**, let's support **the future of Missouri**.

This year, we are also proposing an additional \$3.5 million dollars to increase the number of youth behavioral health liaisons across our state. This initiative will fund 27 liaisons to help our youth in crisis and receive the treatment they need.



**Missouri Governor — Michael L. Parson**  
Office of Communications

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It is needed, it is wanted, and more importantly...It is helping keep our kids SAFE, IN school, and OUT of the system.

Here with us today is Leah Crawford. Last year, she was observing a change in her daughter's behavior and mood. Her daughter, Jewel, was carrying so much hate and anger - things that no child should have to suffer through.

Recognizing a need to do something, Leah took her daughter to Phallin Thornton, one of our youth behavioral liaisons. It was because of Phallin that Leah felt her daughter was finally opening up and making a change for the better.

After a visit with Phallin, she was smiling again... laughing again... being a child again.

This is the real difference this program is making for our kids across the state.

We are grateful to have Leah, Jewel, and Phallin with us here today. Would you please stand to be recognized?

This year, to address the severe shortage of Certified Nursing Assistants all across our state, we are proposing nearly \$4 million dollars to boost C-N-A training and programs.

With this increase, we expect 4,000 additional students to gain C-N-A training and employment at a long-term care facilities and other medical facilities, including our Missouri Veterans Homes.

We owe it to Missourians to provide them with quality care, and C-N-As are critical to that mission.

AND we also want to thank all of our doctors, nurses, and health care professionals across our state who care for our citizens.

**Public Safety**

We must also always look to improve when it comes to public safety in our state.

Unfortunately, our home, schools, and communities are not immune to violence. BUT it's our jobs... the individuals in this building to do what we can to promote a safer Missouri.

This past year, we saw violence and shootings plague schools and communities across the nation, and sadly our state was no exception.



**Missouri Governor — Michael L. Parson**  
Office of Communications

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The events that unfolded at Central Visual & Performing Arts High School just a few months ago were nothing short of tragedy.

As friends and family mourn, a community grieves, and a school tries to continue on without a valued and beloved teacher and student...we must recommit ourselves to ensuring our schools are safe.

While we will never understand or control the violence of these deranged individuals, we can look to the school safety officers and law enforcement who got it right that day.

They were prepared...they had a plan...they saved lives and prevented a tragic situation from becoming even worse.

We want to ensure that preparedness and response can be repeated across our state if the unthinkable ever occurs again.

That's why this year we are proposing **\$50 million dollars** for school safety grants to further protect **our children** and **our schools**.

We know that public safety starts with supporting our men and women on the front lines who answer the call... who wake up every day to protect and serve.

BUT we know that law enforcement recruitment has suffered in recent years...AND it is critical that we take action to **build the bench** in law enforcement.

Last year, we established the Missouri Blue Scholarship program to recruit officers across the state.

Already this program has received high interest and success, with 147 Missourians already earning a scholarship.

Joining us today are Rachel Kelley and Samuel Altom.

Rachel always dreamed of becoming a police officer, but like so many...life gets in the way. Now, she can afford the opportunity to pursue her dream and serve her community thanks to our scholarship program.

Samuel has witnessed firsthand that there can sometimes be disconnect and distrust by younger generations towards law enforcement...he wants to help fix that and hopes to one day help recruit and train future police officers.



**Missouri Governor — Michael L. Parson**  
Office of Communications

This scholarship program and the support it provides to people like Rachel and Samuel are perfect examples of how we can help build the bench in law enforcement.

Would you please join me in welcoming Rachel and Samuel?

For anyone willing to step up to protect and serve their communities, we must do everything we can to support them.

AND as I've said...In this state, we support and defend our law enforcement officers, we don't defund them...**AND OUR ADMINISTRATION NEVER WILL.**

Infrastructure, education, workforce development, health care, mental health, public safety...it's not one or the other...it's everything working together that allows a better future for our children and our families.

We have always invested in these priorities... and we always will.

## **CONCLUSION**

For us, it's all about the WHY.

The WHY we aren't done yet...the WHY we CAN'T be don't yet...it's because of our children.

AND joining us on the floor today is the WHY...

Would you please welcome students from Missouri's Blue Ribbon Schools who want to share their American Dream with you...

From Kirkwood...

- Ben Herwick and Julia McDonald want to study business.

From Nixa...

- Meghana Nakkanti wants to study Public Health
- AND Gideon Carter wants to study computer science.

From Eugene Field...

- Carson DeFazio wants to be a soccer coach
- AND Rosalind Martin wants to be a baker.



**Missouri Governor — Michael L. Parson**  
Office of Communications

---

From Epic...

- Henley Ricklefs wants to be a Veterinarian
- AND Sawyer Burch who wants to join the NFL...AND we're rooting for Sawyer as long he's with the Kansas City Chiefs.

From Dewey...

- Mahlia Wahid wants to study business
- AND Decker Rardon wants to be an engineer.

From Chapel Lakes...

- Cooper Minks wants to be a sports agent
- AND Skylaur James wants to be an Olympic runner.

From Blair Oaks...

- Emmerson Hilty wants to be a teacher and principal
- AND Preston Snitker wants to play professional sports.

AND behind them, we also have children from Discovery Place Daycare who are here to **SHOW you** their American Dream.

Let's give these kids a round of applause.

Teresa and I are living our American Dream. Our dream is one of faith, family, and patriotic service. A dream that allowed a rowdy farm boy from small-town Wheatland and a bright and beautiful woman from Bolivar to meet and one day become the Governor and First Lady of Missouri.

For the kids in this room...It's their future, their dreams, THEIR AMERICAN DREAM that we MUST support and fight for...It's our **privilege** and **our responsibility**.

Kids all across our state have hopes, dreams, and ambitions...AND their American Dream can be bolstered and broadened by the decisions we make right here in this building.

Looking at these kids standing here today...I am confident there is nothing we cannot overcome **FOR THEM**.

These children **are the WHY**...If we're not willing to sacrifice for these kids, support their dreams, or stand up for their future, then we must ask ourselves **why are we here?**



**Missouri Governor — Michael L. Parson**  
Office of Communications

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The First Lady and I have always believed in and supported the American Dream...and as we enter the final two years of our time as Governor and First Lady the importance of that mission becomes all the more clear.

Like us, the American Dream should be achievable for **ALL...NEVER the exception for SOME.**

Our American Dream was possible because leaders before us looked at you and me...and recognized **we** were worth fighting for.

Today, I ask the same of you...THESE Missouri children are the future. The future of our state, our nation, and our democracy.

If we fail them...then the **failures of tomorrow** are **the failures of today.**

Let's not fail them today, tomorrow, or ever.

This Governor...this Dad... and this Gramps... IS NOT DONE YET...

**WE**...ARE...NOT...DONE...YET...

It is an honor and privilege to serve as the 57<sup>th</sup> Governor of the state of Missouri.

God bless you, God bless the great State of Missouri, and God bless the United States of America.